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SERVICE

USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

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FOR THE LAWN AND GARDEN

Not So Wild a Dream. This is the time of year home gardeners pour over seed catalogs and dream of summertime when they'll have the biggest and best fruits and vegetables in the neighborhood. Yet it may not all be dreaming. Scientists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture have developed several new varieties that could give you the greenest thumb around. Look for--

Dixie Savoy Spinach. It's immune to blue mold and produces top-quality spinach for eating fresh or for canning and freezing. Developed especially for Eastern and Southern States. Now available.

Enterpriser and Highlander Tomatoes. The Enterpriser is resistant to fusarium and verticillium wilt. Both are early maturing, high yielding tomatoes good for processing. Available to the public next spring.

Yakima Snap Beans. Well suited for home gardens. Good fresh, frozen, or canned. Available now.

Hood Strawberry. Excellent for processing into jam and preserves. Good yields. Adapted for Pacific Northwest. Plants now on the market.

Darrow Blueberry. Darrow produces a dependable crop of large, highly flavored berries. Fruit neither drops nor cracks during wet weather. Available now.

Mandan and Dakota Apples. Two new winter-hardy varieties suitable for the cold, dry regions of Northern Great Plains. Mandan is good for eating fresh and cooking. Dakota is an all-purpose apple. Look for these in 3 or 4 years.

Going to Seed? To get the most for your money when buying grass seed, read the label--then do some fancy figuring. If the seed crosses a state line, the Federal Seed Act requires the contents of the package and the percent of germination of each kind of seed listed on the label. To figure your best buy, multiply the percent of pure seed by the percent of germination and divide by 100. This is the actual value of the package. By comparing these values, you very often will find the more expensive seed actually saves you money.



BOOKLETS TO WRITE FOR

Using a Sewing Machine. It's designed as a teaching manual, but the easy-to-follow instructions make it ideal for the beginning seamstress and the mother who mends. "How to Teach Sewing Machine Use and Care" contains 50 pages of useful information and step-by-step drawings. Published by USDA's Federal Extension Service, this booklet sells for 40 cents. Order from Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402.

Snow Surveys. How much water the western United States will have next summer depends on how much snow falls in the mountains this winter. And it can make a difference to you, the consumer--in the price you pay for fruits and vegetables (crops need water to grow), in available electric power, and in the amount of water you have to drink, bathe and play in. To forecast the summer supply, snow survey teams from the U. S. Department of Agriculture travel some 50,000 miles each winter through rugged mountain terrain, measuring snow depth and water content. How they do the job and what it means to you is told in a picture-filled publication by USDA's Soil Conservation Service. For a free copy of "Snow Surveys," AIB-302, send a postcard to the Office of Information, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 20250.

FARM AND FOREST

One of Those Sure Things. Life on the farm isn't what it used to be--and neither are the taxes. In 1964, farm real estate taxes went up in every state except Montana--for a grand total of \$1.5 billion. Average tax, according to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, was \$1.51 per acre. But the average New Jersey farmer paid \$12.10; the farmer in New Mexico 18 cents.

King-Size Vacation. For your future fun in the forest, Walt Disney is developing a year-round vacation center in the Mineral King area of the Sequoia National Forest. Located midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco, Mineral King will feature an Alpine village which should be at least partially ready for ski enthusiasts by 1969. Lifts will continue in use during the summer months to carry visitors to the top of the mountain for a breath-taking view of the area. The Alpine lodge also will operate the year round. Summertime activities at Mineral King will include camping, picnicking, swimming in pools and lakes, tennis, hiking, riding and fishing.

An "A" for Smokey. Smokey the Bear, and all his many followers, get a big A for achievement. The acreage burned by fires in the National Forests in 1965 was the lowest ever. There were 300 fewer fires and 106,000 fewer acres burned this year than last. Use of helicopters, and smoke jumpers and retardants did much to prevent extensive fire damage.

FRAUD AND BAD DEBTS

Stop, Thief. The amount of fraud and bad debt losses occurring in department stores and apparel, furniture and appliance stores last year rose almost 33 percent, it was reported at the U. S. Department of Agriculture's Outlook Conference. The 1965 figure amounts to about 0.5 percent of total sales and nearly 1 percent of the credit sales in these stores. A major part of the credit fraud involves use of charge-plates that belong to others. While a charge-plate owner is generally liable for all purchases on his plate--at least until he reports it missing--most stores don't press claims against a customer who loses his plate.

OUT OF RESEARCH

Warm-Up for Football Fields. You've heard of buried electric cables that melt snow and ice from driveways. Well, the same technique is now being used on athletic fields--to melt snow, make grass grow, and keep soil and turf in top condition throughout the sporting season. Tests made by USDA engineers and turf specialists of the Purdue University Agricultural Experiment Station have worked out so well that electric cables are being installed at the new Civic Center Busch Memorial Stadium at St. Louis, Mo. Buried 8 inches deep at 1-foot intervals, the cables will heat up the field whenever the outdoor temperature drops below 40° F.

Chilled Peach Slices. Coming up--another new product that combines convenience and quality. This time it's sliced fresh peaches packed in wide-mouthed glass jars, chilled and ready to use. There's no fuss, no waste. And you never had peaches taste so good. They are tree-ripened and at their flavor peak. And, once on the market, they'll be available as long as 12 weeks after the fresh peach season. This new process for preserving fresh peach slices without canning or freezing (refrigeration required) was developed by scientists at the Georgia Agricultural Experiment Station working under contract with the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Cotton a Go-Go. Race car drivers can now get a new type of cotton uniform--lightweight, comfortable and flame resistant. The comfort comes from cotton's natural qualities, its cool airiness and agreeable feel. The burn protection is the result of a special flame-resistant treatment based on research conducted at the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The new uniforms, extensively tested in the Midwest, went on the national market a few months ago.

COMMUNITY ACTION

A Closet of Clothes. Nothing' unusual about that--except that it's in a school. And those who go to the closet are boys and girls who could not otherwise attend school because they wouldn't have had the clothes to wear. Most of the clothing is used; some is new. All is provided by the home demonstration club of Rosedale, Miss. In addition, this club--with other civic groups--helps pay for school lunches for needy children, buys them workbooks and art materials. It even pays for having the youngsters' teeth fixed. (A local dentist does the work for half his usual price.) This help-the-kids program began five years ago. It's a project that snowballed into a community action project--one that paid off not only for the children but the community as well. Will it work in your community? Try it. It just takes a little work and a lot of heart.

PESTS

Naughty Nematodes. Ever hear of a nematode? It's a tiny organism that at one time nearly wiped out the Long Island potato crop. And it's persona non grata in the United States. Yet nematodes are constantly trying to sneak in--in the soil on shamrocks shipped here for St. Patrick's Day, on the tires of a used tractor, even on the soles of an innocent traveler's golf shoes. That's why all luggage, packages and mail coming into this country are checked carefully at our borders by U. S. Department of Agriculture plant quarantine inspectors. A dirty golf shoe could mean a ruined golf course in New England; a muddy tractor tire, a ruined crop in the Midwest.



FOOD FACTS

Eager Eaters. Got a teen-ager in the family? Then you've also got a big grocery bill. A boy, 15 to 20 years old, eats more than any other member of the family--even Dad. According to statistics from the U. S. Department of Agriculture, a week's groceries for a teen-age boy cost about \$11.20; for his father, \$9.00. That's using a moderate-cost food plan. If you want to feed them fancier foods, the teen-ager will cost you \$12.80; the man, 35 to 55 years, \$10.40.

The Meat Market. Last year--for the first time in 6 years--per capita beef consumption dropped. So did the consumption of pork, lamb and mutton. In fact, 1965 saw a big 8-pound drop in per capita consumption of red meats. Most of this, however, was in pork (nearly 7 pounds). And the pork picture still isn't too bright. Supplies will continue short until the second half of this year. Also, there'll be little change in beef production and probably a slight drop in lamb and mutton. The U. S. Department of Agriculture, however, reports chicken consumption continuing upward. It's now at 33 pounds per person--compared with 99 for beef, 58 for pork, and 4 for lamb and mutton.

On Ice. More and more of the frozen fruits and vegetables you buy are getting the once-over by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. More than 75 percent of the total pack is graded for quality. This comes to 3.4 billion pounds--a half billion more than just a year ago.

Big, Bigger, Biggest. The biggest change in food retailing has been the rise of supermarkets. Today, supermarkets (\$500,000 or more a year) account for 12 percent of all stores and do three-fourths of the grocery business. In 1948, only 2 percent of the grocery stores were supermarkets, yet even then they accounted for 26 percent of sales.

SHOPPING TIPS

Be a Label Reader. You'll find extra money in your pocket if you read the labels when you shop for food. Take canned fruits and vegetables as a for-instance. To save money, pass up whole fruits and vegetables. They are usually higher priced than slices, chunks or halves. Small or "mixed pieces" are even less expensive. Also, look for fruit packed in light syrup rather than heavy. (You'll save on calories, too.) "Fancy" and "extra fancy" on a label usually means top quality fruits and vegetables, but probably also at top prices. For everyday meals, the lower priced styles are just as nutritious and flavorful, say marketing specialists at the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

What's Plentiful? This month it's anything that has peanuts in it. Peanuts and peanut products are the featured items on the U. S. Department of Agriculture's Plentiful Foods List. Also in good supply during March are fresh oranges, eggs, rice, potatoes, prunes and prune juice.

New Wrinkles. Know how to tell whether the leather in a pair of shoes is good? Count the wrinkles. If many tiny wrinkles form on the grain when you bend the shoe, it's top-quality leather, reports Consumers All, the new U. S. Department of Agriculture yearbook.